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CIA Contamination Approved

A sign of how the Central Intelligence Agency has contaminated legitimate American institutions is indicated by a recent federal appellate court ruling that the CIA can keep its relationships with universities secret. As an agency that specializes in fraud, deceit, bribery and infiltration, the CIA should have no relationship with universities, which stand for — or should stand for — openness, free inquiry and the search for truth.

Yet a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia upheld, in a unanimous ruling, a lower court decision that rejected the Freedom of Information Act request of a student of the University of California at Los Angeles that was designed to disclose any unsavory university-CIA connections. The student's suit sought disclosure of past and present arrangements and relationships between the intelligence agency and the university's 11 campuses. The court said any information

about a specific school's relationship with the intelligence agency could help foreign intelligence agencies.

So what! Is the appellate court implying that — once the CIA has infiltrated universities with spies — the law authorizes secrecy about it because possible aid to a foreign intelligence agency is worse than the corruption of an academic community? Where does that leave traditional American values — the value of academic freedom, the values of free speech and free association, the protection of privacy? The CIA usually establishes relationships with universities for recruitment and spying, not for the legitimate purpose of gathering intelligence about foreign governments. The appellate court decision signifies not only the weakness of the Freedom of Information Act, which the Reagan administration is trying to make even weaker, but the need to protect universities from being undermined by the CIA.